

CHAPTER 21

Making Oral Presentations

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Understanding the Role of Oral Presentations

An oral presentation has one big advantage over a written one: it enables a dialogue between the speaker and the audience. Listeners can make comments or ask questions, and the speaker and listeners can talk before and after the presentation. As a technical communicator, you can expect to give oral presentations to five types of audiences:

- **Clients and customers.** You present the features of your products or services and their advantages over those of the competition. After concluding the sale or landing the contract, you might provide oral operating instructions and maintenance tips to users.
- **Colleagues in your organization.** You might instruct co-workers on a subject you know well. After you return from an important conference or an out-of-town project, you might brief your supervisors. If you have an idea for improving operations at your organization, you might write an informal proposal and then present it orally to a small group of managers. Your presentation helps them determine whether to study the idea.
- **Fellow professionals at technical conferences.** You might speak about your own research project or about a team project to professionals in your field or in other fields.
- **Government agencies.** You might speak before local, state, or federal government officials to explain a project your organization carried out. Or you might explain a proposed project so that the government officials can assess its implications. For instance, if you represent a developer, you might need to speak about the possible environmental impacts of a project your organization is proposing.
- **The public.** You might deliver oral presentations to civic organizations and the general public to help these audiences understand your organization's activities and plans. Oral presentations can help your organization reinforce its brand.

Understanding the Process of Preparing and Delivering an Oral Presentation

The Focus on Process box on [page 583](#) presents an overview of the process of preparing and delivering an oral presentation. The rest of this chapter discusses this process, beginning with how to prepare a presentation.

FOCUS ON PROCESS: Oral Presentations

When preparing an oral presentation, pay special attention to these steps.

PLANNING

Think about how you can best prepare effective presentation graphics that are visible, legible, simple, clear, and correct. Choose the appropriate technology based on the speaking situation and the available resources.

DRAFTING

Choose effective and memorable language. Your listeners will not be able to read your presentation to help them understand your message.

REVISING

Rehearse at least three times, making any necessary changes to your transitions, the order of your slides, or your graphics. Get feedback from others on ways to improve your presentation. See the Speaker's Checklist at the end of this chapter.

EDITING

Make sure your spoken words and slides are well written. See [Chapter 10](#) for advice on writing correct and effective sentences.

PROOFREADING

Make sure that your slides are free of errors. See [Appendix](#), Part C, for proofreading tips.

Preparing the Presentation

When you see an excellent 20-minute presentation, you are seeing only the last 20 minutes of a process that took many hours. Experts recommend devoting 20 to 60 minutes of preparation time for each minute of the finished presentation ([Nienow, 2013](#)). That means that the average 20-minute presentation might take more than 13 hours to prepare. Obviously, there are many variables, including your knowledge of the subject and your experience creating graphics and giving presentations on that subject. But the point is that good presentations don't just happen.

As you start to prepare a presentation, think about ways to enlist others to help you prepare and deliver it. If possible, you should rehearse the presentation in front of others. You can also call on others to help you think about your audience and purpose, the organization of the information, the types of graphics to use, appropriate designs for slides, and so forth. The more extensively you work with other people as you plan, assemble, and rehearse, the more successful the presentation is likely to be.

Preparing an oral presentation requires five steps:

- analyzing the speaking situation
- organizing and developing the presentation
- preparing presentation graphics
- choosing effective language
- rehearsing the presentation

ANALYZING THE SPEAKING SITUATION

First, analyze your audience and purpose. Also determine how much information you can deliver in the allotted time, and consider matters of setting, such as where the presentation will take place and what tools will be available to you.

Analyzing Your Audience and Purpose In planning an oral presentation, consider audience and purpose, just as you would in writing a document.

- **Audience.** What does the audience know about your subject? Your answer will help you determine the level of technical vocabulary and concepts you will use, as well as the types of graphics. Why are audience members listening to your presentation? Are they likely to be hostile, enthusiastic, or neutral? A presentation on the benefits of free trade, for instance, will be received one way by conservative economists and another way by U.S. steelworkers. Does your audience include nonnative speakers of English? If so, prepare to slow down the pace of the delivery and avoid unfamiliar slang or idioms.
- **Purpose.** Are you attempting to inform or to both inform and persuade? If you are explaining how wind-turbine farms work, you will describe a process. If you are explaining why your company's wind turbines are an economical way to generate power, you will compare them with other power sources.

Your analysis of your audience and purpose will affect the content and the form of your presentation. For example, you might have to emphasize some aspects of your subject and ignore others altogether. Or you might have to arrange topics to accommodate an audience's needs.

Budgeting Your Time At most professional meetings, each speaker is given a maximum time, such as 20 minutes. If the question-and-answer period is part of your allotted time, plan accordingly. Even for an informal presentation, you will probably have to work within an unstated time limit that you must determine from the speaking situation. If you take more than the appropriate amount of time, eventually your listeners will resent you or simply stop paying attention.

For a 20-minute presentation, the time allotment shown in [Table 21.1](#) is typical. For scripted presentations, most speakers need a little over a minute to deliver a double-spaced page of text effectively.

TABLE 21.1 Time Allotment for a 20-Minute Presentation

TASK	TIME (MINUTES)
• Introduction	2
• Body	
–First Major Point	4
–Second Major Point	4
–Third Major Point	4

• Conclusion	2
• Questions	4

Considering Setting You may be delivering your presentation in person or remotely, with or without technical aids, to an audience ranging from 1 person to 1,000 or more people. All of these variables will affect the type of presentation you prepare and the way you prepare it. For example, if you will be speaking without technical aids to a small group of people, you may want to prepare handouts for them to take along. If you are preparing a remote online presentation on a platform such as WebEx or JoinMe, keep in mind that viewers will be focused on the materials they see on their computer or tablet screens — so your presentation materials will be perhaps even more important than the words you speak.

ORGANIZING AND DEVELOPING THE PRESENTATION

The speaking situation will help you decide how to organize and develop the information you will present.

For more about organizational patterns, see [Ch. 7](#).

Start by considering the organizational patterns used typically in technical communication. One of them might fit the speaking situation. For instance, if you are a quality-assurance engineer for a computer-chip manufacturer and must address your technical colleagues on why one of the company's products is experiencing a higher-than-normal failure rate, think in terms of cause and effect: the high failure rate is the effect, but what is the cause? Or think in terms of problem-method-solution: the high failure rate is the problem; the research you conducted to determine its cause is the method; your recommended action is the solution. Of course, you can combine and adapt several organizational patterns.

As you create an effective organizational pattern for your presentation, note the kinds of information you will need for each section of the presentation. Some of this information will be data; some of it will be graphics that you can use in your presentation; some might be objects that you want to pass around in the audience.

Some presenters like to outline their presentations on paper or in a word-processing document. However, more and more, people are outlining with their presentation software.

As you organize your presentation, you will want to plan the introduction and the conclusion.

Planning the Introduction Like an introduction to a written document, an introduction to an oral presentation helps your audience understand what you are going to say, why you are going to say it, and how you are going to say it.

GUIDELINES: Introducing the Presentation

In introducing a presentation, consider these five suggestions.

- ▶ **Introduce yourself.** Unless you are speaking to colleagues you work with every day, begin with an introduction: "Good morning. My name is Omar Castillo, and I'm the Director of Facilities here at United." If you are using slides, include your name and position on the title slide.
- ▶ **State the title of your presentation.** Like all titles, titles of presentations should name the subject and purpose, such as "Replacing the HVAC System in Building 3: Findings from the Feasibility Study." Include the title of your presentation on your title slide.
- ▶ **Explain the purpose of the presentation.** This explanation can be brief: "My purpose today is to present the results of the feasibility study carried out by the Facilities Group. As you may recall, last quarter we were charged with determining whether it would be wise to replace the HVAC system in Building 3."
- ▶ **State your main point.** An explicit statement can help your audience understand the rest of the presentation: "Our main finding is that the HVAC system should be replaced as soon as possible. Replacing it would cost approximately \$120,000. The payback period would be 2.5 years. We recommend that we start soliciting bids now, for an installation date in the third week of November."
- ▶ **Provide an advance organizer.** Listeners need an advance organizer that specifically states where you are going: "First, I'd like to describe our present system, highlighting the recent problems we have experienced. Next, I'd like to Then, I'd like to Finally, I'd like to invite your questions."

Planning the Conclusion Like all conclusions, a conclusion to an oral presentation reinforces what you have said and looks to the future.

GUIDELINES: Concluding the Presentation

In concluding a presentation, consider these four suggestions.

- ▶ **Announce that you are concluding.** For example, “At this point, I’d like to conclude my talk with” This statement helps the audience focus on your conclusions.
- ▶ **Summarize the main points.** Because listeners cannot replay what you have said, you should briefly summarize your main points. If you are using slides, you should present a slide that lists each of your main points in one short phrase.
- ▶ **Look to the future.** If appropriate, speak briefly about what you think (or hope) will happen next: “If the president accepts our recommendation, you can expect the renovation to begin in late November. After a few hectic weeks, we’ll have the ability to control our environment much more precisely than we can now — and start to reduce our expenses and our carbon footprint.”
- ▶ **Invite questions politely.** You want to invite questions because they help you clarify what you said or communicate information that you did not present in the formal presentation. You want to ask politely to encourage people to speak up.

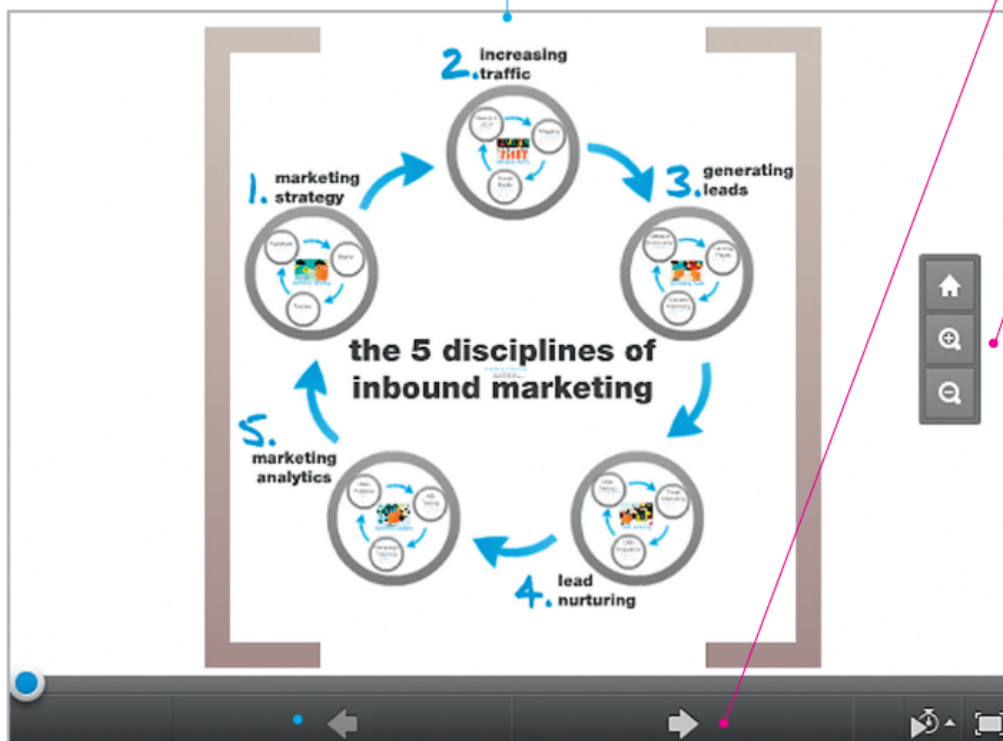
PREPARING PRESENTATION GRAPHICS

Graphics clarify or highlight important ideas or facts. Statistical data, in particular, lend themselves to graphical presentation, as do abstract relationships and descriptions of equipment or processes. Researchers have known for decades that audiences remember information better if it is presented to them verbally and visually rather than only verbally. One other advantage of using presentation graphics is that the audience is not always looking at you. Giving the audience another visual focus can reduce your nervousness.

For more about creating graphics, see [Ch. 12](#).

Most speakers use presentation software to develop graphics. By far the most popular program is PowerPoint, but other programs are becoming popular as well. One that has gained a lot of attention is Prezi, which takes a different approach from PowerPoint. Whereas PowerPoint uses a linear organization — the speaker presents each slide in sequence — Prezi uses a network or web pattern of organization. [Figure 21.1](#) shows an example of a Prezi slide.

The free version of Prezi is cloud-based; that is, you have to be connected to the Internet to use it. This feature means that you can deliver your Prezi presentation from any computer with an Internet connection, that your team members can collaborate from remote locations, and that your presentation is stored in the cloud. However, your presentation is visible to all who visit the Prezi site, so you should be sure that it contains no confidential information or information you do not wish to share with those beyond your original audience.



Although the speaker can present each slide in sequence using the arrows at the bottom of the screen, Prezi makes it simple for the speaker to create a new sequence each time he or she delivers the presentation or to come back to a particular slide or set of slides during the question-and-answer period.

When the speaker clicks on any object on this overview slide, the software zooms in to reveal more objects within or next to that object. After discussing an object, the speaker can zoom out to the overview or zoom in to another object.

This capability of Prezi not only makes it easy for the speaker to navigate within the presentation but also helps audience members remember the big picture because they see the overview graphic frequently as the speaker moves from point to point. Whereas PowerPoint is linear like a book — page 6 always precedes page 7 — Prezi is more like a website in that the speaker can easily jump from one object to another.

Figure 21.1

Markel/Selber, *Technical Communication*, 12e, © 2018 Bedford/St. Martin's
Shade Wilson, Scalability Project, LLC.

FIGURE 21.1 The Network Organization of Prezi

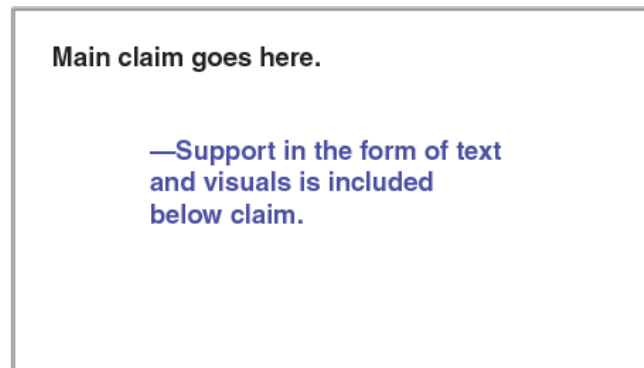
 To watch a tutorial on preparing presentation slides, go to LaunchPad.

Characteristics of an Effective Slide An effective presentation graphic has five characteristics:

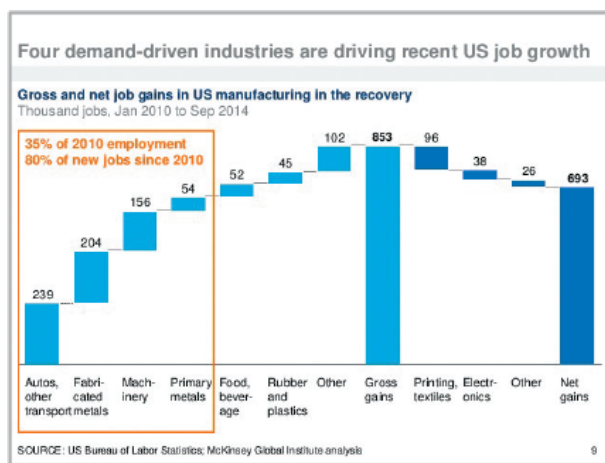
- **It presents a clear, well-supported claim.** In a presentation slide, the best way to present a claim and to support it is to put the claim in the headline section of the slide and the support in the body of the slide. Engineering professor and presentation specialist [Michael Alley \(2007\)](#) recommends the structure shown in [Figure 21.2](#) (on [page 588](#)).
- **It is easy to see.** The most common problem with presentation graphics is that they are too small. In general, text has to be in 24-point type or larger to be visible on a screen. [Figure 21.3](#) on page 589 shows a slide that contains so much information that most of it is too small to see easily.

For more about typefaces, see Ch. 11, [p. 263](#). For more about using color in graphics, see Ch. 12, [p. 300](#).

- **It is easy to read.** Use clear, legible lines for drawings and diagrams; black on white works best. Use legible typefaces for text; a boldface sans-serif typeface such as Arial or Helvetica is effective because it reproduces clearly on a screen. Avoid shadowed and outlined letters.
- **It is simple.** Text and drawings must be simple. Each graphic should present only one idea. Your listeners have not seen the graphic before and will not be able to linger over it.
- **It is correct.** Proofread your graphics carefully. Everyone makes mistakes in grammar, punctuation, or spelling, but mistakes are particularly embarrassing when they are 10 inches tall on a screen.



a. The structure of a typical slide



b. A slide with a claim and a single large graphic

Figure 21.2

Markel/Selber, *Technical Communication*, 12e, © 2018 Bedford/St. Martin's
McKinsey Global Institute.



c. A slide with a claim, several graphics, and explanatory text

FIGURE 21.2 Michael Alley's Claim-and-Support Structure for Presentation Graphics

b. This slide is structured like a paragraph. The headline is the topic sentence; the graphic is the support.

c. In this slide, the headline functions as an advance organizer, introducing the four types of disruptive technology. Each panel has a title, a photograph, and two bullet points that describe the technology's advantages.

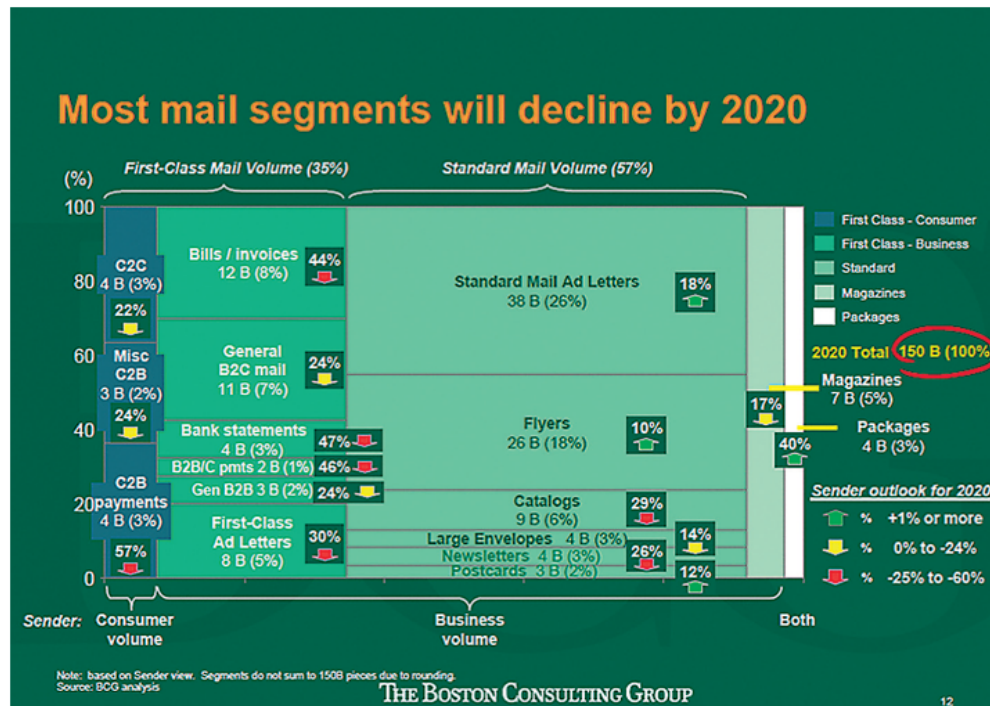


Figure 21.3
Markel/Selber, *Technical Communication*, 12e, © 2018 Bedford/St. Martin's
Information from Boston Group, 2010: [www.usps.com/strategicplanning/_pdf/BCG_Detailed presentation.pdf](http://www.usps.com/strategicplanning/_pdf/BCG_Detailed%20presentation.pdf).

FIGURE 21.3 Too Much Information on a Slide

Most of the information on this slide is too small to see easily

This slide attempts to compare too many types of data at once, including differences between first-class and standard mail, between consumer and business mail, and among various types of mail within those segments. The main point of the slide — the overall decline in the volume of mail — is difficult for the audience to see.

When preparing a presentation using a program such as PowerPoint or Prezi, it may be best to create your own simple design rather than relying on preexisting templates. (For more on creating templates in PowerPoint and Prezi, see the TechTip on [page 591](#).)

Presentation software programs contain many fancy animation effects. For example, you can set the software so that when a new slide appears, it is accompanied by the sound of applause or of breaking glass, and the heading text spins around like a pinwheel. Do not use animation effects that are unrelated to your subject. They undercut your professionalism and quickly become tiresome.

However, one animation effect in PowerPoint, sometimes called *appear and dim*, is useful. When you create a bulleted list, you can set the software to show just the first bullet item and then make the next bullet item appear when you click the mouse. When you do so, the previous bullet item dims. This feature is useful because it focuses the audience's attention on the bullet item you are discussing.

Regardless of whether you are using the appear-and-dim feature, set the software so that you use the mouse (or a colleague does) to advance from one graphic to the next. If you set the software so that the graphics advance automatically at a specified interval, such as 60 seconds, you will have to speed up or slow down your presentation to keep up with the graphics.

One more point: you cannot use copyrighted material — images, text, music, video, or other material — in your presentation without written permission to do so. (Your presentations in class, however, do not require permission because they are covered by the fair-use exemption.)

To watch a tutorial on audio recording and editing, go to LaunchPad.

Graphics and the Speaking Situation To plan your graphics, analyze four aspects of the speaking situation:

- **Length of the presentation.** How many slides should you have? [Smith \(1991\)](#) suggests showing a different slide approximately every 30 seconds of the presentation. This figure is only a guideline; base your decision on your subject and audience. Still, the general point is valid: it is far better to have a series of simple slides than to have one complicated one that stays on the screen for five minutes.
- **Audience aptitude and experience.** What kinds of graphics can your audience understand easily? You don't want to present scatter plots, for example, if your audience does not know how to interpret them.
- **Setting.** What size images are most appropriate for the presentation context? Graphics suitable for a remote online WebEx presentation differ from those suitable for presentation in a small conference room

or a 500-seat auditorium. In WebEx, you can provide more detail because viewers will most likely be sitting close to their computer or tablet screen as they watch your presentation. For use in a large auditorium, by contrast, your slides should have larger, more simplified text and graphics.

- **Equipment.** Find out what kind of equipment will be available to you. Ask about backups in case of equipment failure. If possible, bring your own equipment — then you can be confident that the equipment works and you know how to use it. Some speakers bring graphics in two media just in case; that is, they have slides, but they also have transparencies of the same graphics. If your presentation is going to be recorded to be made available on a website or as a podcast, try to arrange to have the recording technicians visit the site beforehand to see if there are any problems they will need to solve.

TECH TIP

Why To Create a Presentation Template

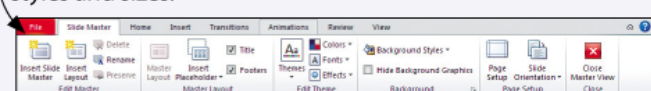
Master slides and templates allow you to maintain a consistent look throughout your presentation graphics without needing to design each individual slide. Although the templates provided by Prezi and PowerPoint can be useful, they often violate basic design principles, and they may not fit the needs of your presentation. When possible, create an original design that suits your topic and will appear fresh and original to your audience members, who have probably seen many of the predesigned templates used before.

How To Create a Presentation Template

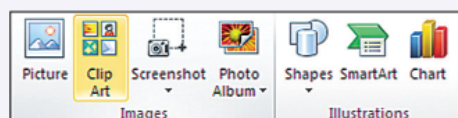
PowerPoint

In PowerPoint, select **Slide Master** from the **Master Views** group on the **View** tab.

By selecting elements on the master slide and then using the commands on the **Slide Master** tab, you can add a background, choose a color scheme, and choose type styles and sizes.

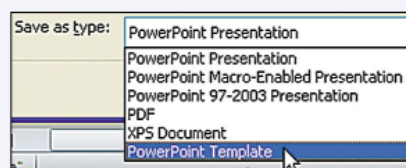


To add graphics to the master slide, use the **Images** and **Illustrations** groups on the **Insert** tab.



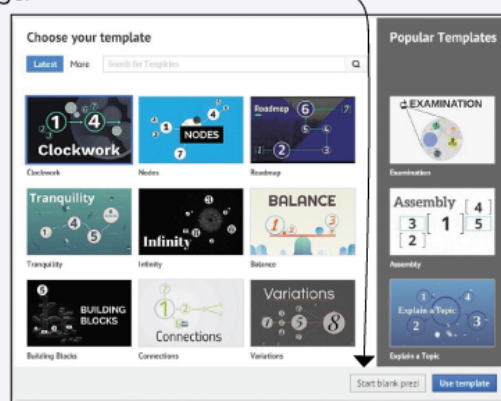
To save your page design so that you can use this design for another presentation, select **Save**

As from the **File** tab, and then select **PowerPoint Template** from the drop-down menu.

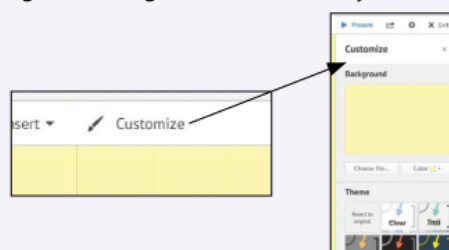


Prezi

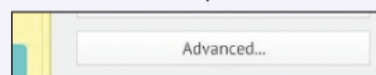
In Prezi, select **Start blank prezi** on the **Choose your template** page.



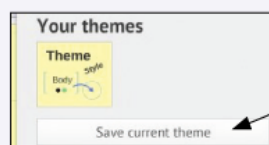
Click on the **Customize** option to launch the **Customize** panel, where you can choose the background colors and insert your own background images or content from your computer.



More background options are available from the **Advanced** button at the bottom of the **Customize** panel.



To save your customized background theme, choose **Save current theme**.



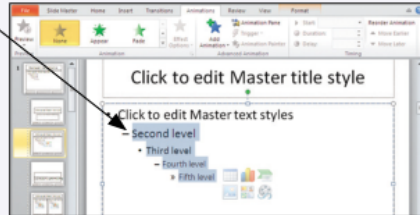
TECH TIP

Why To Set List Items To Appear and Dim During a Presentation

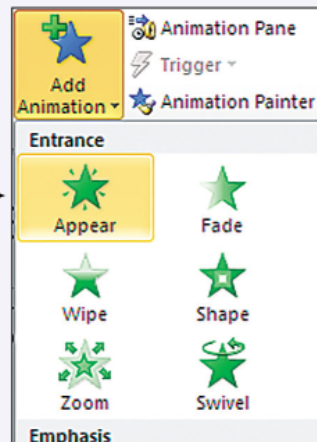
To help your audience focus on the point you are discussing, you can apply PowerPoint's custom animation feature to the **Master Page** so that a list item appears and then dims when the next item appears.

How To Set List Items To Appear and Dim During a Presentation

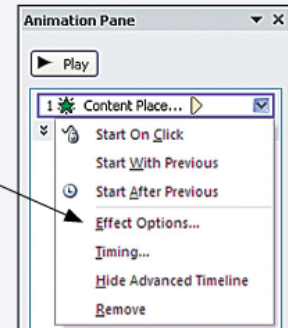
1. To apply a **custom animation**, select the **Title and Content Layout** slide in the **Slide Master** view, and then highlight the list on the slide.



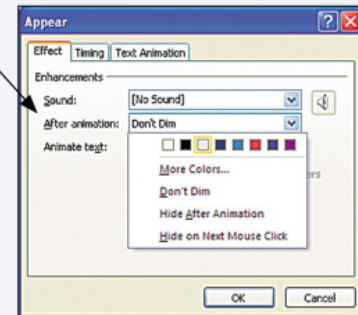
2. In the **Advanced Animation** group, select **Add Animation**, and then select the **Entrance** category and the **Appear** effect.



3. Select the **Animation Pane** button in the **Advanced Animation** group. In the **Animation Pane**, click the drop-down menu and select **Effect Options**.



4. On the **Effect** tab in the **Appear** dialog box, click the **After Animation** drop-down menu and select a dim color.



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Using Graphics To Signal the Organization of a Presentation Used effectively, graphics can help you communicate how your presentation is organized. For example, you can use the transition from one graphic to the next to indicate the transition from one point to the next. [Figure 21.4](#) shows the slides for a presentation that accompanied the report in [Chapter 18](#) on tablet computer use at Rawlings Regional Medical Center (see [Figure 18.8](#) on pp. 490–513.)

Selecting a Tablet Computer for the Clinical Staff at Rawlings Regional Medical Center: A Recommendation Report

Prepared by:
Jeremy Elkins, Director of IT
Eloise Carruthers, Director of Nursing

December 15, 2013

The title slide shows the title of the presentation and the name and affiliation of each speaker. You might also want to include the date of the presentation.

Recommendation Report Outline

1. Introduction
2. Major Results
 - 2.1 Clinical-staff knowledge and attitudes
 - 2.2 BYOD v. hospital-owned model
 - 2.3 Determining criteria
 - 2.4 Assessing tablets
3. Conclusions
4. Recommendation

December 15, 2013

Tablet-Use Recommendation Report

2

The next slide presents an overview, which outlines the presentation. The arrow identifies the point the speaker is addressing.

At the bottom of each slide in the body of the presentation is a footer with the date, the title of the presentation, and the number of the slide. The slide number gives audience members a way to refer to the slide when they ask questions.

1. Introduction: IT expenses for tablet maintenance are rising sharply



December 15, 2013

Tablet-Use Recommendation Report

3

This slide uses a simple bar graph created in PowerPoint. Don't try to present a lot of information on a single slide.

The title of this slide uses the numbering system introduced in the previous slide. This cue helps the audience understand the structure of the presentation. Following the colon is an independent clause that presents the claim that will be supported in the slide.

1. Introduction (cont'd): We cannot certify our tablets for disinfection



December 15, 2013

Tablet-Use Recommendation Report

4

If the images in your presentation are your own intellectual property or are clip art that comes with the software, you can legally display them anywhere. If they are not, you need to cite their sources and obtain written permission. You have three choices for placing the source statements: at the bottom of the appropriate slides, in a sources slide that you show at the end of the presentation, or on a paper handout that you distribute at the end of the presentation.

BeeBright/Shutterstock.

Figure 21.4

Markel/Selber, *Technical Communication*, 12e, © 2018 Bedford/St. Martin's

1. Introduction (cont'd): We lack a policy for making tablets available



December 15, 2013

Tablet-Use Recommendation Report

5

For second and subsequent slides within the same section of the presentation, use the “continued” abbreviation shown here. Notice that the speakers use one color for the generic term (“Introduction”) and a different color for the claim.

Photo: kurhan/Shutterstock.

Recommendation Report Outline

1. Introduction
- 2. Major Results
 - 2.1 Clinical-staff knowledge and attitudes
 - 2.2 BYOD v. hospital-owned model
 - 2.3 Determining criteria
 - 2.4 Assessing tablets
3. Conclusions
4. Recommendation

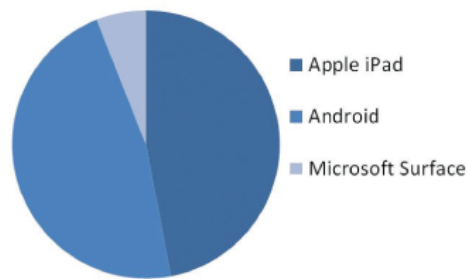
December 15, 2013

Tablet-Use Recommendation Report

6

This slide is identical to Slide 2, except that the arrow has moved. Use this organizing slide to help your audience remember the overall organization of your presentation. Don’t overdo it; if you presented this organizing slide just a few slides ago, don’t use it again until you make the transition to the next major unit in the presentation.

2.1 Results: Clinical staff own iPads and Androids



December 15, 2013

Tablet-Use Recommendation Report

7

A pie chart is a logical choice for representing a small number of components (usually, seven or fewer) that add up to 100 percent.

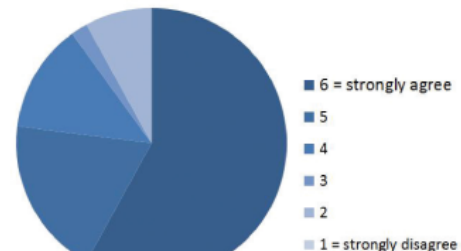
Note that the speakers use conservative blues for all their graphics on the slide set. You don’t need a rainbow full of colors. You need just enough difference so that the audience can distinguish between the different slices.

Figure 21.4

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2.1 Results (cont'd): Clinical staff with tablets consider themselves expert users

“I’m an expert user”



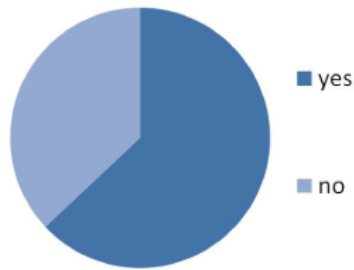
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Slides work best if the text is brief. The speaker will explain that here are the responses to the statement “I consider myself an expert user of my tablet.”

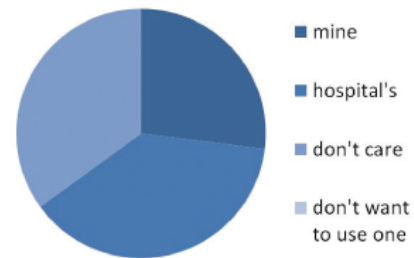
2.1 Results (cont'd): Most clinical staff with tablets use them clinically



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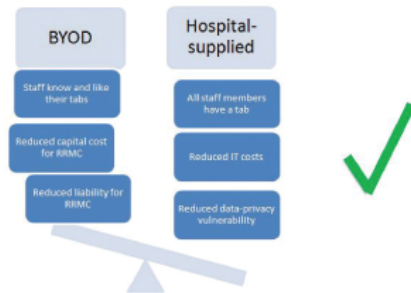
2.1 Results (cont'd): Clinical staff with tablets prefer a hospital-owned model to BYOD



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2.2 Results: Hospital-supplied model slightly preferable to BYOD



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2.3 Results: We set four *necessary* criteria for tablet study



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This slide was made using SmartArt graphics, which are part of PowerPoint. SmartArt graphics help you show logical relationships. Here, the relationship is that the hospital-supplied model is “heavier”—that is, has more to recommend it—than the BYOD model.

The speakers added the checkmark to emphasize that the hospital-supplied model is preferable to the BYOD model.

Figure 21.4

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If the images you show are not your own intellectual property, you can legally display them in a college classroom because they are covered by the fair-use provisions of U.S. copyright law. However, if you display them in a business presentation, you would need formal written permission from the copyright holders. See Ch. 2, pp. 24–26, for more information.
Money: Bureau of Engraving and Printing. Chains on laptop: Elnur/Shutterstock. Disinfecting wipes: BeeBright/Shutterstock.

2.3 Results (cont'd): We set two *desirable* criteria for tablet study

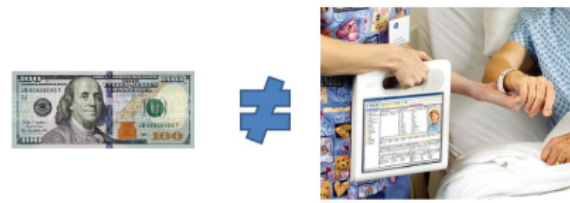


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2.4 Results: Medical-grade tablets are too expensive



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The speakers used the “appear” animation to display first the picture of the tablet and then the picture of the battery. This feature lets the speakers display on the screen only what they are discussing so that the audience is not distracted by other images.

TMT-1830-10 MEDICAL TABLET PC: Courtesy Teguar Corporation. Battery: oxanaart/Shutterstock.

Money: Bureau of Engraving and Printing. Photo of Motion C5: Courtesy of Xplore.

2.4 Results (cont'd): General-purpose tablets meet our data-privacy criterion



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2.4 Results (cont'd): General-purpose tablets meet our other security criteria



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HootSuite App for iPod: Courtesy of HootSuite.

Chains on laptop: Elnur/Shutterstock. HootSuite App for iPad: Courtesy of HootSuite.

Figure 21.4

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2.4 Results (cont'd): General-purpose tablets might meet our disinfection criterion



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2.4 Results (cont'd): General-purpose tablets might meet our durability criterion



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The formatting that appears throughout the slide set—the background color, the horizontal rule, and the footer—is created in the Slide-Master view. This formatting appears in every slide unless you modify or delete it for that slide.

Note that the speakers use color—sparingly—for emphasis. Disinfecting wipes: BeeBright/Shutterstock. HootSuite App for iPad: Courtesy of HootSuite.

TMT-1830-10 MEDICAL TABLET PC: Courtesy Teguar Corporation. HootSuite App for iPad: Courtesy of HootSuite.

2.4 Results (cont'd): General-purpose tablets might meet our battery criterion



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Recommendation Report Outline

1. Introduction
2. Major Results
 - 2.1 Clinical-staff knowledge and attitudes
 - 2.2 BYOD v. hospital-owned model
 - 2.3 Determining criteria
 - 2.4 Assessing tablets
- 3. Conclusions
4. Recommendation

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Battery: oxanaart/Shutterstock. HootSuite App for iPad: Courtesy of HootSuite.

Figure 21.4

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3. Conclusions: Clinical staff who own tablets want to use tablets at work



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3. Conclusions (cont'd): The hospital-supplied model is preferable to BYOD



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As discussed in Ch. 18, conclusions are inferences you draw from results.
Photo: kurhan/Shutterstock.

3. Conclusions Medical-grade tablets would work; general-purpose ones might



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Recommendation Report Outline

1. Introduction
2. Major Results
 - 2.1 Clinical-staff knowledge and attitudes
 - 2.2 BYOD v. hospital-owned model
 - 2.3 Determining criteria
 - 2.4 Assessing tablets
3. Conclusions
- ➡ 4. Recommendation

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Photo of Motion C5: Courtesy of Xplore. HootSuite App for iPad: Courtesy of HootSuite.

Figure 21.4

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Photo: kurhan/Shutterstock. Photo of Motion C5: Courtesy of Xplore. HootSuite App for iPad: Courtesy of HootSuite.

4. Recommendation: We recommend one of two options

1. Reconsider budget, study medical-grade tablets.
2. Test general-purpose tablets on-site.



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As discussed in Ch. 19, recommendations are statements about what you think should be done next.

Some speakers like to make a final slide with the word "Questions?" on it to signal the end of the presentation. You can also display contact information (such as your email address) to encourage audience members to get in touch with you.

Figure 21.4

Markel/Selber, *Technical Communication*, 12e, © 2018 Bedford/St. Martin's

Photo of Motion C5: Courtesy of Xplore. HootSuite App for iPad: Courtesy of HootSuite.

FIGURE 21.4 Sample PowerPoint Presentation

Presentation software allows you to create two other kinds of documents — *speaking notes* and *handouts*

— that can enhance a presentation. [Figure 21.5](#) (on [page 600](#)) shows a page of speaking notes. [Figure 21.6](#) (on [page 600](#)) shows a page from a handout created from PowerPoint slides.

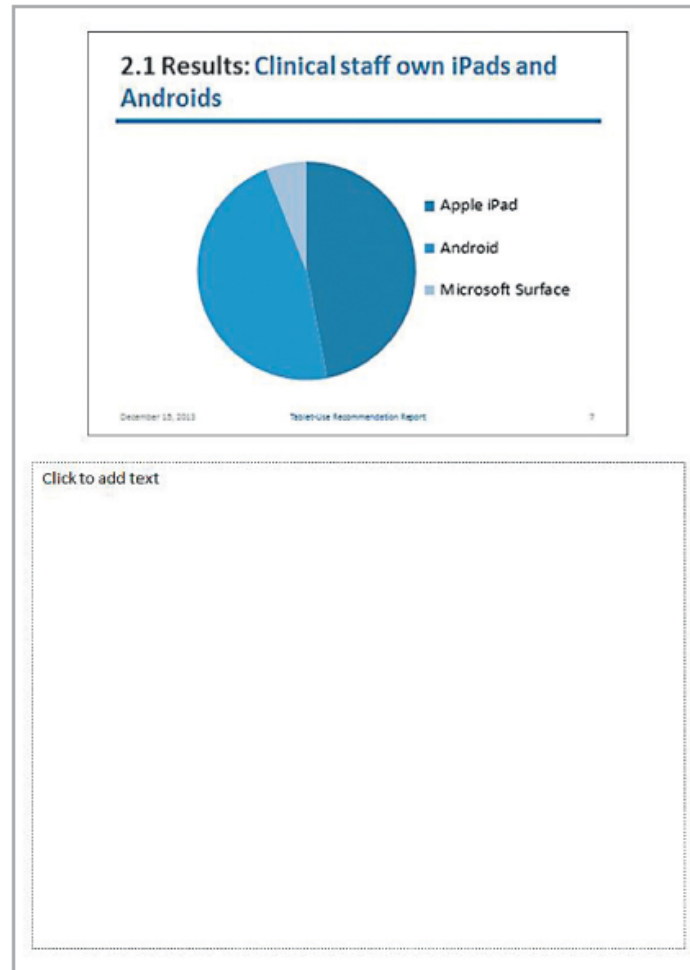


Figure 21.5
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FIGURE 21.5 Speaking Notes

To create speaking notes for each slide, type the notes in the box under the picture of the slide, and then print the notes pages. You can print the slides on your notes pages in color or black and white. The problem with using speaking notes is that you cannot read your notes and maintain eye contact at the same time.

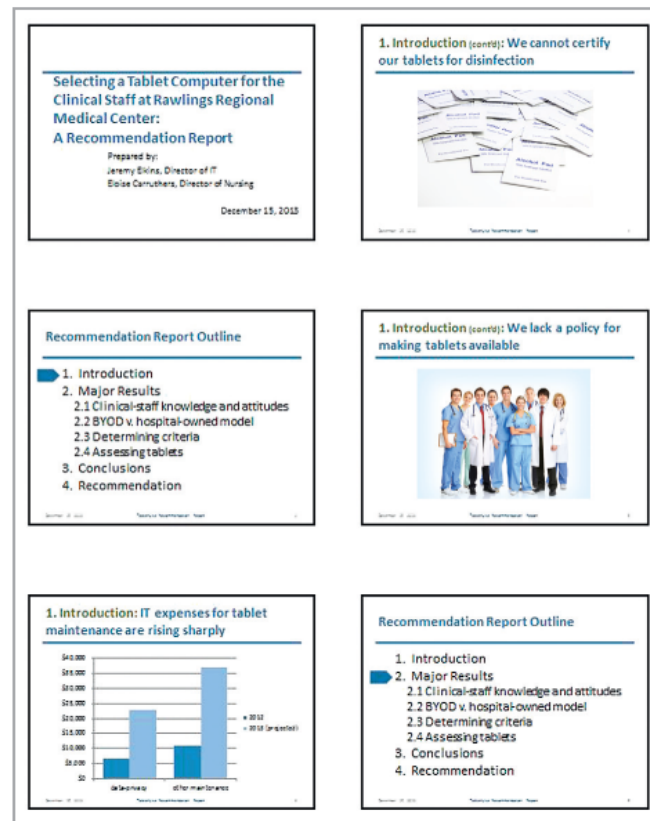


Figure 21.6
 Markel/Selber, *Technical Communication*, 12e, © 2018 Bedford/St. Martin's
 Disinfecting wipes: BeeBright/Shutterstock. Photo of health-care workers:
 kurhan/Shutterstock.

FIGURE 21.6 Handout

In PowerPoint, you use the *Page Setup* tab to configure the file for printing. You can set the software to display from one to nine slides on a page.

CHOOSING EFFECTIVE LANGUAGE

Delivering an oral presentation is more challenging than writing a document for two reasons:

- Listeners can't reread something they didn't understand.
- Because you are speaking live, you must maintain your listeners' attention, even if they are hungry or tired or the room is too hot.

Using language effectively helps you meet these two challenges.

Using Language To Signal Advance Organizers, Summaries, and Transitions Even if you use graphics effectively, listeners cannot “see” the organization of a presentation as well as readers can. For this reason, use language to alert your listeners to advance organizers, summaries, and transitions.

- **Advance organizers.** Use an advance organizer (a statement that tells the listener what you are about to say) in the introduction. In addition, use advance organizers when you introduce main ideas in the body of the presentation.
- **Summaries.** The major summary is in the conclusion, but you might also summarize at strategic points in the body of the presentation. For instance, after a three- to four-minute discussion of a major point, you might summarize it in one sentence before going on to the next major point. Here is a sample summary from a conclusion:

Let me conclude by summarizing my three main points about the implications of the new RCRA regulations on the long-range waste-management strategy for Radnor Township. The first point is The second point is The third point is I hope this presentation will give you some ideas as you think about the challenges of implementing the RCRA.

- **Transitions.** As you move from one point to the next, signal the transition clearly. Summarize the previous point, and then announce that you are moving to the next point:

It is clear, then, that the federal government has issued regulations without indicating how it expects county governments to comply with them. I'd like to turn now to my second main point....

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS ACTIVITY

Integrating Graphics and Text on a Presentation Slide

The following slide is part of a presentation about the Human Genome Project. The questions below ask you to think about the discussion of preparing presentation graphics (on [pp. 586–99](#)).

1. How effective is the Human Genome Project logo in the upper left-hand corner of the slide?
2. How well does the graphic of DNA support the accompanying text on chromosome facts?
3. Overall, how effective is the presentation graphic?

Chromosome Facts

• number of chromosomes:
22 pairs + 1 pair
sex-determining
chromosomes = 46

- one chromosome of each pair donated from each parent's egg or sperm
- sex chromosomes: X,Y for males; X,X for females
- largest chromosome: #1 = ~263 million base pairs (bp)
- smallest chromosome: Y = ~59 million bp

DNA Details

Labels in diagram: Nucleus, Chromosomes, Separating strands of parent DNA, Daughter helix, Thymine, Deoxyribose, Phosphate, Hydrogen, Carbon, Oxygen, A single nucleotide.

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Using Memorable Language Effective presentations require memorable language.

GUIDELINES: Using Memorable Language in Oral Presentations

Draw on these three techniques to help make a lasting impression on your audience.

- ▶ **Involve the audience.** People are more interested in their own concerns than in yours. Talk to the audience about their problems and their solutions. In the introduction, establish a link between your topic and the audience's interests. For instance, a presentation to a city council about waste management might begin like this:

Picture yourself on the Radnor Township Council two years from now. After exhaustive hearings, proposals, and feasibility studies, you still don't have a waste-management plan that meets federal regulations. What you do have is a mounting debt: the township is being fined \$1,000 per day until you implement an acceptable plan.

- ▶ **Refer to people, not to abstractions.** People remember specifics; they forget abstractions. To make a point memorable, describe it in human terms:

What could you do with that \$365,000 every year? In each computer lab in each school in the township, you could replace each laptop every three years instead of every four years. Or you could expand your school-lunch program to feed every needy child in the township. Or you could extend your after-school programs to cover an additional 3,000 students.

- ▶ **Use interesting facts, figures, and quotations.** Search the Internet for interesting information about your subject. For instance, you might find a brief quotation from an authoritative figure in the field or a famous person not generally associated with the field (for example, Theodore Roosevelt on waste management and the environment).

A note about humor: only a few hundred people in the United States make a good living being funny. Don't plan to tell a joke. If something happens during the presentation that provides an opening for a witty

remark and you are good at making witty remarks, fine. But don't *prepare* to be funny.

REHEARSING THE PRESENTATION

Even the most gifted speakers need to rehearse. It is a good idea to set aside enough time to rehearse your speech thoroughly.

Rehearsing the Extemporaneous Presentation Rehearse your extemporaneous presentation at least three times.

- **First rehearsal.** Don't worry about posture or voice projection. Just deliver your presentation aloud with your presentation slides. Your goal is to see if the speech makes sense — if you can explain all the points and create effective transitions. If you have trouble, stop and try to figure out the problem. If you need more information, get it. If you need a better transition, create one. You are likely to learn that you need to revise the order of your slides. Pick up where you left off and continue the rehearsal, stopping again where necessary to revise.
- **Second rehearsal.** This time, the presentation should flow more easily. Make any necessary changes to the slides. When you have complete control over the organization and flow, check to see if you are within the time limit.
- **Third rehearsal.** After a satisfactory second rehearsal, try the presentation under more realistic circumstances — if possible, in front of others. The listeners might offer questions or constructive advice about your speaking style. If people aren't available, record a video of the presentation on your computer or phone, and then evaluate your own delivery. If you can visit the site of the presentation to rehearse there, you will find giving the actual speech a little easier.

Rehearse again until you are satisfied with your presentation, but don't try to memorize it.

Rehearsing the Scripted Presentation Rehearsing a scripted presentation is a combination of revising and editing the text and rehearsing your delivery. As you revise, read the script aloud to hear how it sounds. Once you think the presentation says what you want to say, try recording yourself with an audio or video recorder as you read. Revise the presentation until you are satisfied, and then rehearse in front of real people. Do not memorize the presentation. There is no need to; you will have your script in front of you on the podium.

Delivering the Presentation

When giving your presentation, you will concentrate on what you have to say. However, you will have three additional concerns: staying calm, using your voice effectively, and using your body effectively.

CALMING YOUR NERVES

Most professional actors admit to being nervous before a performance, so it is no wonder that most technical speakers are nervous. You might well fear that you will forget everything or that no one will be able to hear you. These fears are common. But keep in mind three facts about nervousness:

- **You are much more aware of your nervousness than the audience is.** They are farther away from your trembling hands.
- **Nervousness gives you energy and enthusiasm.** Without energy and enthusiasm, your presentation will be flat. If you seem bored and listless, your audience will become bored and listless.
- **After a few minutes, your nervousness will pass.** You will be able to relax and concentrate on the subject.

This advice is unlikely to make you feel much better if you are distracted by nerves as you wait to give your presentation. Experienced speakers offer three tips for coping with nervousness:

- **Realize that you are prepared.** If you have done your homework, prepared the presentation carefully, and rehearsed it several times, you'll be fine.
- **Realize that the audience is there to hear you, not to judge you.** Your listeners want to hear what you have to say. They are much less interested in your nervousness than you are.
- **Realize that your audience is made up of individual people who happen to be sitting in the same room.** You'll feel better if you realize that audience members are like the people you talk to every day and they also get nervous before making presentations.

When it is time to begin, don't jump up to the lectern and start speaking quickly. Walk up slowly and arrange your text, outline, or note cards before you. If water is available, take a sip. Look out at the audience for a few seconds before you begin. Begin with "Good morning" (or "Good afternoon" or "Good evening"), and refer to any officers and dignitaries present. If you have not been introduced, introduce yourself. In less formal contexts, just begin your presentation.

So that the audience will listen to you and have confidence in what you say, use your voice and your body to project an attitude of restrained self-confidence. Show interest in your topic and knowledge about your subject.

GUIDELINES: Releasing Nervous Energy

Experienced speakers suggest the following four strategies for dealing with nervousness before a presentation.

- ▶ **Walk around.** A brisk walk of a minute or two can calm you by dissipating some of your nervous energy.
- ▶ **Go off by yourself for a few minutes.** Having some time alone can help you compose your thoughts and realize that you can handle your nervousness.
- ▶ **Talk with someone for a few minutes.** For some speakers, distraction works best. Find someone to talk to.
- ▶ **Take several deep breaths, exhaling slowly.** Doing so will help you control your nerves.

USING YOUR VOICE EFFECTIVELY

Inexperienced speakers often have problems with five aspects of vocalizing.

- **Volume.** Because acoustics vary greatly from room to room and with different equipment, you won't know how well your voice will carry in a particular setting until you have heard someone speaking there. In some rooms, speakers can use a conversational volume. Other rooms require greater voice projection. Because more people speak too softly than too loudly, you might ask if the people in the back of the room can hear you. However, even soft-spoken people tend to speak too loudly when they speak into microphones. If you are using a mic, glance at your audience to see if you need to adjust your volume. The body language of audience members will be clear. If you are using a remote online platform such as WebEx or JoinMe, experiment with your microphone before the presentation to find the speaking volume that produces the most clarity.

- **Speed.** Nervousness makes people speak quickly. Even if you think you are speaking at the right rate, you might be going a little too fast for some listeners. Although you know your subject well, your listeners are trying to understand new information. For particularly difficult points, slow down for emphasis. After finishing one major point, pause before introducing the next one.
- **Pitch.** In an effort to control their voices, many speakers end up flattening their pitch. The resulting monotone is boring and, for some listeners, distracting. Try to let the pitch of your voice go up or down as it would in a normal conversation.
- **Articulation.** Nervousness can accentuate sloppy pronunciation. If you want to say *environment*, don't say *envirament*. A related problem occurs with technical words and phrases, especially the important ones. When a speaker uses a phrase over and over, it tends to get clipped and become difficult to understand. Unless you articulate carefully, *Scanlon Plan* will end up as *Scanluhplah*.
- **Nonfluencies.** Avoid such meaningless fillers as *you know*, *like*, *okay*, *right*, *uh*, and *um*. These fillers do not hide the fact that you aren't saying anything. A thoughtful pause is better than an annoying verbal tic.

USING YOUR BODY EFFECTIVELY

Besides listening to you, the audience members at in-person presentations will be looking at you. Effective speakers use their body language to help listeners follow the presentation.

GUIDELINES: Facing an Audience

As you give a presentation, keep in mind these four guidelines about physical movement.

- ▶ **Maintain eye contact.** Eye contact helps you see how the audience is receiving the presentation. You will see, for instance, if listeners in the back are having trouble hearing you. With small groups, look at each listener randomly; with larger groups, look at each segment of the audience frequently during your speech. Do not stare at the screen, the floor, your notes, or out the window. If you are giving an online presentation, maintain eye contact with the camera when you are on.
- ▶ **Use natural gestures.** When people talk, they often gesture with their hands. Most of the time, gestures make a presentation look natural and improve listeners' comprehension. You can supplement your natural gestures by using your arms and hands to signal pauses and to emphasize important points. When referring to graphics, walk toward the screen and point to direct the audience's attention. Avoid mannerisms — physical gestures that serve no useful purpose, such as jiggling the coins in your pocket or pacing back and forth. Like verbal mannerisms, physical mannerisms are often unconscious. Constructive criticism from friends can help you pinpoint them.
- ▶ **Don't block the audience's view of the screen.** Stand off to the side of the screen. Use a pointer to indicate key words or images on the screen.
- ▶ **Control the audience's attention.** People will listen to and look at anything that is interesting. If you hand out photocopies at the start of the presentation, some people will start to read them and stop listening to you. If you leave an image on the screen after you finish talking about it, some people will keep looking at it instead of listening to you. When you want the audience to look at you and listen to you, remove the graphics or make the screen blank.

PRESENTING TO ALL AUDIENCES

If your audience includes people of different cultures and native languages, keep in mind the following three suggestions:

- **Hire translators and interpreters if necessary.** If many people in the audience do not understand your language, hire interpreters (people who translate your words as you speak them) and translators (people who translate your written material in advance).
- **Use graphics effectively to reinforce your points for nonnative speakers.** Try to devise ways to present information using graphics — flowcharts, diagrams, and so forth — to help your listeners understand you. Putting more textual information on graphics will allow your listeners to see as well as hear your points.
- **Be aware that gestures can have culturally based meanings.** As discussed in [Chapter 12](#), American hand gestures (such as the thumbs-up sign or the “okay” gesture) have different — and sometimes insulting — meanings in other cultures. Therefore, it's a good idea to avoid the use of these gestures. You can't go wrong with an arms-out, palms-up gesture that projects openness and inclusiveness.

If your audience includes people with varying physical abilities, keep in mind the following four suggestions:

- Provide handouts in accessible formats ahead of time for audience members to study and review.

- Hire a sign-language specialist who can translate your presentation for audience members with hearing impairments.
- Make a transcript of your talk available for audience members with hearing impairments.
- Provide a recording of the presentation for audience members who can't take notes.

Answering Questions After a Presentation

When you finish a presentation, thank the audience simply and directly: “Thank you for your attention.” Then invite questions. Don’t abruptly ask, “Any questions?” This phrasing suggests that you don’t really want any questions. Instead, say something like this: “If you have any questions, I’ll be happy to try to answer them now.” If invited politely, people will be much more likely to ask questions, and you will be more likely to succeed in communicating your information effectively.

When you respond to questions, you might encounter any of these four situations:

- **You’re not sure everyone heard the question.** Ask if people heard it. If they didn’t, repeat or paraphrase it, perhaps as an introduction to your response: “Your question is about the efficiency of these three techniques.” Some speakers always repeat the question, which gives them an extra moment to prepare an answer.
- **You don’t understand the question.** Ask for clarification. After responding, ask if you have answered the question adequately.
- **You have already answered the question during the presentation.** Restate the answer politely. Begin your answer with a phrase such as the following: “I’m sorry I didn’t make that point clear in my talk. I wanted to explain how” Never insult an audience member by pointing out that you already answered the question.
- **A belligerent member of the audience rejects your response and insists on restating his or her original point.** Politely offer to discuss the matter further after the presentation. If you are lucky, the person won’t continue to bore or annoy the rest of the audience.

If it is appropriate to stay after the session to talk individually with members of the audience, offer to do so.

ETHICS NOTE

ANSWERING QUESTIONS HONESTLY

If an audience member asks a question to which you do not know the answer, admit it. Simply say, “I don’t know” or “I’m not sure, but I think the answer is” Smart people know that they don’t know everything. If you have some ideas about how to find out the answer — by checking a particular reference source, for example — share them. If the question is obviously important to the person who asked it, you might offer to meet with him or her to discuss ways for you to provide a more complete response later, perhaps by email.

Sample Evaluation Form

 For a downloadable version of [Fig. 21.7](#), see the additional resources in LaunchPad.

[Figure 21.7](#) (on [page 608](#)) is a form that can help you focus your thoughts as you watch and listen to presentations by your classmates.

Oral Presentation Evaluation Form		
Speaker(s) _____	Topic _____	
The left-hand column lists statements about different aspects of the presentation. In the middle column, rate the speaker(s) on each aspect of the presentation by writing a number from 1 to 6, with 1 signifying that you strongly disagree with the statement and 6 signifying that you strongly agree with the statement. In the right-hand column, write any comments you wish the speaker(s) to see.		
Aspect of the Presentation	Rating (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree)	Comments
Organization and Development		
1. In the introduction, the speaker related the topic to the audience's concerns.		
2. In the introduction, the speaker explained the main points he or she wanted to make in the presentation.		
3. In the introduction, the speaker explained the organization of the presentation.		
4. I found it easy to understand the organization of the presentation.		
5. The speaker used appropriate and sufficient evidence to clarify the subject.		
6. In the conclusion, the speaker summarized the main points effectively.		
7. In the conclusion, the speaker invited questions politely.		
8. In the conclusion, the speaker answered questions effectively.		
9. The speaker used the allotted time effectively.		
Verbal and Physical Presence		
10. The speaker used interesting, clear language to get the points across.		
11. The speaker used clear and distinct enunciation.		
12. The speaker seemed relaxed and poised.		

Figure 21.7
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(continued)

Aspect of the Presentation	Rating (1 = strongly disagree; 6 = strongly agree)	Comments
Verbal and Physical Presence		
13. The speaker exhibited no distracting vocal mannerisms.		
14. The speaker exhibited no distracting physical mannerisms.		
15. The speaker made eye contact effectively.		
16. The speaker was enthusiastic.		
Use of Graphics		
17. The speaker used graphics effectively to reinforce and explain the main points.		
18. The speaker used appropriate kinds of graphics.		
19. The speaker used graphics effectively to highlight the organization of the presentation.		
20. The graphics were easy to see.		
21. The graphics were easy to understand.		
22. The graphics looked correct and professional.		
23. The graphics helped me understand the organization of the presentation.		
For Group Presentations		
24. The group seemed well rehearsed.		
25. The graphics were edited so that they looked consistent from one group member to the next.		
26. The transitions from one group member to the next were smooth.		
27. Each group member seemed to have done an equal amount of work in preparing and delivering the presentation.		
On the other side of this sheet, answer the following two questions.		
28. What did you particularly like about this presentation?		
29. What would you have done differently if you had been the speaker?		

Figure 21.7
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(continued)

FIGURE 21.7 Sample Evaluation Form

SPEAKER'S CHECKLIST

- ☐ Did you analyze the speaking situation — the audience and purpose of the presentation? ([p. 583](#))
- ☐ Did you determine how much information you can communicate in your allotted time? ([p. 584](#))
- ☐ Did you consider the variables of your presentation setting? ([p. 584](#))
- ☐ Did you choose an appropriate organizational pattern and determine what kinds of information to present? ([p. 584](#))
- ☐ Did you create an outline? ([p. 585](#))
- ☐ Did you plan your introduction and your conclusion? ([p. 585](#))

Does each presentation graphic have these five characteristics?

- ☐ It presents a clear, well-supported claim. ([p. 587](#))
- ☐ It is easy to see. ([p. 587](#))
- ☐ It is easy to read. ([p. 588](#))
- ☐ It is simple. ([p. 589](#))
- ☐ It is correct. ([p. 589](#))
- ☐ In planning your graphics, did you consider the length of your presentation, your audience's aptitude and experience, the presentation setting, and the equipment available? ([p. 590](#))
- ☐ Did you plan your graphics to help the audience understand the organization of your presentation? ([p. 592](#))
- ☐ Did you use language to signal advance organizers, summaries, and transitions? ([p. 599](#))
- ☐ Did you choose language that is vivid and memorable? ([p. 602](#))
- ☐ Did you rehearse your presentation several times, recording it or using a live audience? ([p. 602](#))
- ☐ Did you consider the needs of all audience members, including those from other cultures and those with varying physical abilities? ([p. 605](#))

EXERCISES

1. Learn some of the basic functions of a presentation software program. For instance, modify a template, create your own original design, add footer information to a master slide, insert a graphic on a slide, and set the animation feature so that at first just the first bullet item on a slide appears and then a mouse click brings up the second bullet item.
2. Using PowerPoint, create a design to be used for the master slide for a presentation to be delivered in one of your classes. If you are unfamiliar with how to create a master slide, consult PowerPoint's help files. Be prepared to explain the design to your classmates.
3. Prepare a five-minute presentation, including graphics, on one of the following topics. The audience for your presentation will consist of the other students in your class, and your purpose will be to introduce them to an aspect of your academic field.
 - a. Define a key term or concept in your field.
 - b. Describe how a particular device or technology is used in your field.
 - c. Describe how to carry out a procedure common in your field.

Your instructor and the other students will evaluate the presentation by filling out the form in [Figure 21.7](#).

4. **TEAM EXERCISE** Prepare a five-minute presentation based either on the proposal for a research project that you prepared in [Chapter 16](#) or on your recommendation report for that project. Your audience will consist of the other students in your class, and your purpose will be to introduce them to your topic. The instructor and the other students will evaluate your presentation by filling out the form in [Figure 21.7](#). Your instructor might have you work on this assignment collaboratively.



CASE 21: Understanding the Claim-and-Support Structure for Presentation Graphics

You have been invited to a student conference to make an oral presentation of a paper you wrote for a class. Because you do not have much experience delivering presentations, you run a few ideas by a friend, who offers great pointers. She's offered to look at your revised slides, so you need to get to work creating the slides and determining the best organization scheme for them. To get started on your presentation, go to LaunchPad.



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